

Narrative of John Vickers as told to Patricia Smith

I resided in Boise, Idaho on November 8, 2018 at the time of the Camp Fire. My father, William James Vickers resided in Paradise, California. I was notified about 11 am by my brother Robert Vickers that a devastating fire was occurring in Paradise, California. I knew my dad resided there and was immediately concerned for his safety and well-being. I acquired the soonest and arrived in California on the morning of November 9, 2018. My brother had arrived on November 8 because he was able to secure an earlier flight. I met my dad and brother at the Sacramento airport. At that time, he knew he had lost his home. I could see a difference in his personality. He was typically lively and upbeat, and I could see he was scared to have to start everything anew at age 83. We drove to Robert's home in Scotts Valley, CA since we could not secure a hotel or anything closer to determine our next of action. We knew that we would not be able to return to the Molokai property to assess the damage for quite some time. We had to get to a location where the air was not so smoky and hazardous to our health.

The only consolation for my dad was that he had his two sons close by him to share in this traumatic event. As the realization set in of the losses my dad sustained, I could see a change in his personality and his energy level.

Due to the change in my father's health, I elected to make multiple trips via airplane to Scotts Valley to assist with my father's care and management of his losses with his insurance. My brother and I took turns making sure my dad was not alone for any length of time.

I took over my dad's finances and I was added to his accounts. This occurred about a week after the fire. He was exhibiting increasing difficulty making decisions. My father asked me to assist him with his bill paying, decision making, etc. Prior to the Camp Fire William maintained his own finances and made his own decisions. He had no difficulties in any area and lived totally independently. He had previously not admitted that he needed help in any area. William was an engineer when he was employed and had a high functioning brain.

Over the first month after the fire, my brother and I took over all the areas of decision making for my dad. However, we did not have a legal power of attorney to represent him and speak for him, so he had to participate in many of the important calls. I noticed a decline in his ability to deal with these calls. He would get agitated and frustrated continually. I sensed he was taking this personally.

On December 21, 2018, I was on the phone with William and the insurance adjuster when William had the myocardial infarction. I knew he was frustrated and angry with having to relive the moments of the fire and his losses and thought initially that he had just hung up the phone. At this time, I was in Idaho and was on a conference call with my dad and the insurance adjuster to assist in the process. I made contact with my brother Robert who was unfortunately not able to check on my dad in person for three hours. When Robert arrived, he found my father has passed away.

My dad has amassed a gun collection during his lifetime which he had planned to leave to myself and my son. I have memories of my dad collecting these over the years and now I miss that I can't see some of these guns and remember my dad when I look and touch them. My dad had bought my son a wooden ship about 4 foot long (of the Mayflower era). He had restored it over time. We were unable to ship the ship since it was so fragile. Unfortunately, we were never able to transport it and it was destroyed in the Camp Fire. Of all items lost in the fire, I miss the ship the most. These are only two of the most

sentimental, irreplaceable items lost in the fire, not to mention family photos and just memories of my dad at his house.

My dad worked hard over his life; he took great pride in the physical items which he was able to collect throughout his life. He was devastated at losing everything that he earned. He had planned to leave his most prized possessions to his children and grandchildren. The money alone that he received from the insurance would never be enough to console nor compensate him.

I'd been made aware of the fire that morning and immediately called my dad. When I reached him on his cell phone, he was outside his house and said he was hosing down both his property and that of a neighbor. I strongly encouraged him to pack up what he could and leave the area ASAP and he indicated he was getting ready to do that. I asked him to call and keep me updated on what was happening but, since things were developing so quickly, it wasn't until later in the afternoon that I heard from him. By that time, he'd been relocated I believe to the local fairgrounds(?) with many others. This turned out to be just temporary and he went from there to a church in Chico. I heard from him again that evening and he said they were all spending the night at the church (in the gymnasium). I told him that I wanted to come pick him up. I was in San Jose that night so began to make my way to Chico. However, it was already getting somewhat late and was very dark by the time I arrived in Butte Co and I had some difficulty finding the church. It was after midnight by the time I arrived and my dad was already asleep on one of the many cots set up. I was offered my own cot and decided to stay the night there.

The next day was spent trying to obtain some essential items for dad since he literally just had the clothes on his back. We eventually made it back to my place in Scotts Valley. It's just a small studio apt. so, after the first few nights, I turned it over to my dad and arranged to stay at my girlfriends place. For approximately the next 6 weeks, I assisted my dad (with the help of my brother) to try and slowly get some semblance of his life back together. He was the kind of man who avoided displaying alot of emotion if he could help it. But I could see how affected he was by the fire. He was in a constant state of anxiety waiting for news on whether or not his house, cars and belongings managed to survive the fire. When we were finally able to obtain photos taken of his property, confirming what was lost, he took it pretty hard, understandably. He loved his house in Paradise. He was always glad that he'd chosen to retire there. For an 83 year old single man to lose everything he had like that was obviously a very painful experience. I will always believe that dad would still be alive today had it not been for the fire. He had a few minor health issues common to being 83 years old. But I think the trauma from the fire really crushed his spirit. He went from living in a home he loved in the area he loved (and had specifically chosen to retire in) where he had made so many friends over the years to living in his son's tiny, studio apt by himself with only basic belongings, cut off from his old friends who had all been displaced and no idea how to put his life back together and move forward. I believe this put him under an enormous amount of stress and strain until, finally, his heart gave out.

There certainly are items of sentimental value that were destroyed in the fire and it seems impossible to put a price on them so I'm not going to focus on that. It's really the loss of our father that hurts the most. I'm so grateful he was able to get out of Paradise in time and didn't perish in the actual fire. But the negative impact it had on the remaining weeks of his life and, thus, me and my brothers life, was huge.

Thank You,
Robert Vickers

Narrative of William Vickers as remembered by his sons, John Vickers and Robert Vickers and as told to Patricia Smith:

William woke up early the morning of the Camp Fire. Initially he was not extremely concerned, the sky was reddish, and he could see the smoke in the air, however he did not sense imminent danger. He began watering down his property and that of his neighbor. He was "playing it safe". Robert phoned him after he heard about the fire and strongly encouraged William to evacuate ASAP. William told Robert he was getting ready. Robert had wanted William to maintain phone contact so that he could be certain that William evacuated to safety. Robert knew the fire was developing quickly and moving fast due to the high winds. Robert did not hear from his father, William again until later that afternoon. William determined it was time to leave, he packed a few things and put them in his car. By the time he reached the road, and joined the long line of traffic, William began to be concerned that he would be able to reach safety via car. He stopped his car in a lot on the side of the road and took some photos. (see attachments). Williams plan had been to walk to downtown Paradise and phone a friend who would transport him to safety. He had no idea that phone service would stop, and he wouldn't be able to call anyone for assistance in transporting him to safety. However, he left his car in the lot. During this period, John, Williams' son had been trying to contact William on the phone to make sure William had evacuated safely. However, the phones were no longer in service and John was unable to find out about his father's safe escape until later in the day. William mentioned later when he was reunited with his sons that he heard explosions. He thought they might be propane tanks exploding. There was fire on all sides, the trees were burning all around him. These were mature pine trees. Fortunately, he did not receive any severe burns that he complained about after his sons met up with him. The sound of the fire was so loud! The winds were so severe it was frightful to wonder which direction they would blow the fire in next. This increased his sense of danger. John estimated that William walked 3 miles before reality set in and he realized he would have to get his car and attempt to get to safety in his vehicle with or without his concerns about the traffic congestion. He began walking back to his car to attempt to drive out when a sheriff approached and asked William what he was doing. William told him, "I am walking back to my car so I can evacuate." At this time, the situation was SO critical that the police officer took William in his car and drove him to safety!. He was transported to a shelter; this is where he met his sons.

Both sons noted a rapid decline in their father's health after the devastation of the Camp Fire.
See supporting narratives by Robert and John Vickers.